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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 001028

SIPDIS

FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO  
WARSAW

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael Tulley for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Your visit to Warsaw is an opportunity to reset relations with Poland, a loyal ally. Poles have long aspired to building a special relationship with the U.S., on par with what we have with the UK, but they believe the U.S. has not always shown the same enthusiasm. To an extent, many Poles still view the U.S. as a protective, post-Cold War "big brother." While we may see Poland as a country that has "graduated" and is ready to stand up on its own, many Poles are still reluctant to take this step.

¶2. (C) PM Tusk is ready. He reportedly viewed former Central European leaders' letter to President Obama as a step backward. Thus far, however, his efforts to assert Polish leadership have focused narrowly on the EU, not the transatlantic relationship. He views our bilateral partnership almost exclusively in security terms, issues in which he is not personally interested or engaged. It's worth the effort to try to bring him around. Tusk will likely be elected president in 2010, and he will be a force in Polish politics for the next decade. It's not too late to persuade Tusk that security cooperation with the U.S. means more than entanglement in U.S. conflicts, and that strategic cooperation involves more than security. The Poles can increasingly help us in the EU -- they share U.S. views and welcome our input on most, if not all, regional security issues, and are eager to coordinate with us on a range of non-security issues, including climate/energy security and development assistance.

FIRST STEP: CLEAR THE AIR

¶3. (C) Cooler Polish heads have begun to prevail since the President's September 17 announcement on European Missile Defense. Media no longer speculate about an "Obama-Medvedev Pact" to improve U.S.-Russian relations over Poland's head. While some still doubt our decision was truly made on the basis of revised assessments of the Iranian threat, media and policy makers are beginning to evaluate the new system on its merits and potential to increase Polish security.

¶4. (C) A clear public message that Poland has the right of first refusal on hosting SM-3 missiles -- and that Russia will not have a veto over where and how system components are deployed -- will help to ease Polish skepticism about U.S. intentions. A similarly frank message that the U.S. intends to move forward with commitments outlined in the August 2008 Declaration on Strategic Cooperation -- including the coveted rotation of fully operational Patriot missiles -- will clear the air and lay the groundwork for constructive discussions on how we can improve strategic cooperation in other areas. A brief discussion of our assessment of the Iranian nuclear and missile programs -- which most Poles do not perceive as threats -- would give Kaczynski and Tusk a better understanding of our MD strategy and greater confidence in

trying to persuade the Polish public of the threat from Iran.

15. (C) While Tusk is unlikely to raise Poland's exclusion from the Visa Waiver Program, Kaczynski might. If he doesn't, the press will. It would be helpful to make a frank statement that the Administration supports Poland's inclusion in the Program and that we will continue efforts already underway to help Poland meet the legislation's criteria.

#### RUSSIA / EASTERN EUROPE

16. (C) PM Tusk has tamped down the Russophobic rhetoric of his populist predecessor and -- in much the same way we have -- has focused on dialogue and pragmatic cooperation. Both he and Kaczynski will be interested in an update on our efforts to reset relations with Russia. Both will also want to get a sense of U.S. priorities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Poles believe Ukraine holds the key to European security. They are interested in stepping up U.S.-Polish cooperation to promote stability in Ukraine and Georgia, and would like the U.S. to coordinate with EU programs -- like the Eastern Partnership -- designed to draw countries in the region closer to Western institutions.

#### AFGHANISTAN

17. (C) Kaczynski and Tusk will also be eager to hear your views on Afghanistan. Polish public opposition to participation in ISAF is widespread but shallow, and the government's commitment remains steady. Tusk and members of his Cabinet have clearly stated that Polish troops will leave

WARSAW 00001028 002 OF 002

Afghanistan with NATO, not before. Poland currently has 2,000 soldiers in Afghanistan and last year assumed sole military responsibility for Ghazni province. Tusk has resisted Kaczynski's push for more troops, stating Poland will focus instead on providing additional equipment and increasing assistance for civilian reconstruction. Poland has also vigorously pressed fellow EU member states to step up support for police training missions and civil reconstruction. The Poles are eager for our help in developing strategies for civil reconstruction in Ghazni, as well as bolstering domestic public support here in Poland.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE / ENERGY SECURITY

18. (C) Unlike many of its neighbors, Poland's reliance on domestic coal for electricity lessens its dependence on Russian energy. At the same time, this puts Poland at odds with EU and global emissions caps, which favor imported (Russian) gas and other alternatives to coal. Poles are not deeply concerned with climate change, and are just now grappling with how they will manage their international obligations to reduce carbon emissions. They would like to cooperate with the U.S. on developing clean coal, nuclear power, and renewables. Poland could be a potential ally in pushing the EU to take a balanced approach on emissions reductions and developing a more coherent EU energy security policy, including energy solidarity and Caspian outreach.

#### ECONOMIC COOPERATION

19. (C) Tusk remains disappointed that Poland has not been invited to participate in the various G-20 summits and major economies meetings. He may argue that a Central European voice (Poland's being the most largest and most stable) is needed at the table. Poland's economy has continued to grow despite the global economic crisis thanks to a combination of prudent fiscal policy, conservative banks and regulators, immature debt markets, and lucky timing. Relatively strong Polish consumption, a weaker currency, and influx of EU funds have cushioned the blow from declining investments and exports. Rising deficits related to the crisis, while still modest by current EU standards, are beginning to raise

concern locally and among analysts. Poland has, along with the U.S., advocated within the EU and international financial institutions for a strong regional approach to the crisis and has been particularly supportive of Ukraine and Baltic states.

#### PRIVATE PROPERTY RESTITUTION

¶10. (C) While now may not seem the right time to put yet another sensitive issue on the table, not doing so would send the wrong message. Poles have not hesitated to be honest when they are disappointed; neither should we. Poland is one of the only countries in Central Europe that has not made legislative provisions for an expedited, administrative (rather than judicial) mechanism for resolving private property restitution claims. The Government has completed draft legislation, but refuses to submit it to parliament in the midst of an economic crisis, even though claims will be paid out over 15 years -- most after the economic crisis has passed. A quiet reminder might help generate forward momentum.

TULLEY